

the desired direction except in a few isolated cases where the master, having himself some skill in a manual occupation, has interested himself in cultivating the taste among his pupils, and in a few large infant departments where a short period weekly has been devoted to the simplest forms of manual work—stick-laying, paper-folding, plaiting, colouring—to a certain extent in connection with lessons in drawing or counting.

“In the infant department, where freer conditions of method and subject, due to the absence of a prescribed syllabus, exist, the beginnings are most easily made; and little more difficulty should be found in adapting suitably graduated exercises to the First and Second Standard classes where the prescribed programme is limited to a few subjects, and much time must now be wasted in profitless repetitions. All this may be expected to be done during the usual school-hours, and in intimate relation with existing subjects; but when we approach the Third Standard the question of the time-table assumes a more serious aspect; and, although the occupations contemplated must, if they serve the chief purpose for which they are instituted, facilitate the ordinary standard progress, and therefore secure as good a result in less time than before, we are too conscious of the possibility of futile effort, the result of limited experience, and too anxious not to burden teachers whose powers are already severely taxed, to urge the introduction of additional work. Perhaps the difficulty—which extends also to the Fourth Standard—may in time find its own solution, and in the meanwhile something may be done without undue pressure by an extension to these standards of card-modelling practice in connection with drawing-lessons. In the Fifth and Sixth Standards likewise we cannot see how appropriate manual practice can be wholly included in the usual five hours of instruction; but the pupils have then arrived at an age when an hour or two extra time weekly spent in a workshop may prove an agreeable relaxation, and the physical and mental energy now expended in the cricket and football field may well find another scarcely less attractive field of exercise.

“In the workshop, the schoolmaster who has received a proper training, and who in virtue of his profession understands the bearing of the manual exercises on general education, must in the end prove the most valuable kind of instructor, and probably a modification in the training of pupil-teachers and students will in a few years supply the requisite skill; but for the present dependence must be placed almost exclusively on the services of intelligent artisans. It is to the larger centres alone that we can look for such instructors, and in them alone will the number of pupils to be served justify the necessary initial expenditure.

“While technical instruction is foreign to the purposes of the elementary school, and manual training in connection with elementary education is mainly to be valued as a means of mental discipline, there is one subject, eminently suited to the elementary school, which is in one view technical, in another manual, the purpose of which, however, is wholly one of direct practical utility. We refer to cooking and kindred occupations of housewifery. The subject has indeed quite as much claim to be recognised as a subject of elementary instruction as reading and writing, and is equally necessary for at least one-half of the community. At any rate, to be able to cook a dinner fairly is much more important for our girls, as a preparation for the business of life, than the skilful manipulation of vulgar and decimal fractions, or a knowledge of the operations of the bill-discounter and the stock-broker. Practice in cooking is indeed only the corollary of the bookish instruction in “domestic economy” which already forms a part of the usual school course, in larger schools at least, and facilities for the practice should, in our view, form an essential feature of a school's equipment. We do not even think it necessary that practice of the kind should be taken outside the usual school-hours. Where practical lessons in the subject are regularly given—that is, lessons in which the pupils contribute a share of the work—we are inclined to believe that the Inspector might fairly be permitted to make some allowance in other respects. A Sixth Standard girl, for instance, might well be permitted to qualify for the Sixth Standard in arithmetic by doing again a Fifth Standard test, and in the Fifth Standard a similar concession might be made by accepting the half of the Fifth Standard work in the subject. Below the Fifth Standard it would not be profitable to go.

“Again, in this respect the school of substantial size could alone expect to be fully provided with the means of carrying out the work as completely as is desirable; but even in outlying districts some attempt might be made with most imperfect appliances. We need not go very far out of our way to regard the gridiron and the saucepan as necessary parts of school furniture, and expect them to be made use of over the school-room fire as instruments of practical instruction.”

The Education Board reports as follows:—

“In May, 1896, the Board held a conference with head-masters and delegates from School Committees, representing large and small schools alike, to consider the question of introducing manual instruction into the schools of this district, and of establishing classes for technical instruction. The evidence then taken, with that given by the Board's Inspectors at a special meeting held shortly afterwards, conclusively proved: (1.) That in connection with the lower standards and preparatory classes only, and that but in a modified degree, could manual instruction be introduced into the Board's schools during the ordinary school-hours without interfering with the present standard syllabus—a syllabus already sufficiently heavy to severely tax the powers of the teachers. (2.) That only in the larger centres would the Board be justified in establishing classes in manual instruction out of the ordinary school-hours. (3.) That, with but few exceptions, the teachers in the Board's service were not qualified to impart manual instruction. After further consideration, with the view of inaugurating the only scheme which appeared practicable, as well as ascertaining to what extent advantage of classes at hours not included in the ordinary school-time would be taken, the Board decided to apply to the Government for a grant of £200 for fitting up a work-room at the Normal School, and providing the tools and apparatus required for giving manual instruction. A favourable reply has been received from the Department, and operations will be commenced so